

7.15.2008 - Rahall Backs Coal-To-Liquids Provision in ARC Reauthorization

U.S. Representative Nick J. Rahall (D-WV)

Tuesday helped to pass legislation in the House to extend and enhance the programs of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), including a new program — the “Economic and Energy Development Initiative” — that would boost development of an environmentally advanced coal-to-liquids (CTL) industry in West Virginia and throughout the region.

The new initiative would enable the ARC to make grants, enter into contracts, and give technical assistance for energy initiatives that use biomass (plant materials) to produce alternative liquid fuels; biomass would be used in combination with coal to create CTL fuels with reduced emissions. It would also support development of projects to capture carbon and store emissions from the generation of coal-based power. Both components are key to coal’s future and to advancing a viable, domestic CTL industry to provide “American-made energy for America.”

The remarks delivered by Rahall in support of the legislation on the House Floor follow.

Remarks of U.S.
Rep Nick J. Rahall, II

S. 496

Appalachian Regional Development Reauthorization

July 15, 2008

[Madam/Mr.] Speaker, I am pleased to lend my strong support to S. 496, a bill that will not only extend but also enhance the beneficial work of the Appalachian Regional Commission.

Throughout my career as a Member of this body, I have supported the work of the ARC. I have seen, firsthand, how it has enabled struggling communities throughout my State and the Appalachian region to provide economic opportunity and a renewed sense of hope to our citizens.

I would like to point out specific provisions in this bill aimed at increasing American-made energy for America.

We have spent weeks on this Floor hearing about the need to increase domestic energy supplies by becoming even more beholden to Big Oil. But we have at our fingertips the chance to help forge a better solution.

We possess the technological know-how to convert coal to environmentally advanced transportation fuels and electric power.

This bill recognizes that, and provides for an infusion of investment to help make that happen.

A provision in this legislation would enable the ARC to make grants, provide technical assistance, enter into contracts, and otherwise provide for projects that would increase the use of renewable energy, particularly biomass, in the Appalachian Region to produce alternative transportation fuels.

This is extremely important in helping make a commercial coal-to-liquids industry a reality in this country. The use of biomass with coal in the conversion process can sharply cut carbon emissions of coal-to-liquid fuels. A study by Princeton University found that by combining 30 percent biomass with coal in the conversion process and capturing and sequestering the carbon dioxide, CTL fuel can be made cleaner than other conventional liquid fuels in use today.

A second provision in the bill would provide support for the development of conventional energy resources – such as coal – to produce electricity using advanced greenhouse gas reduction technologies. More plainly, it would help to advance projects which would capture and store of carbon emissions, a necessity to our continued use of coal and other fossil fuels throughout the foreseeable future.

In this age of increasing energy need and growing carbon awareness, it makes sense that such an initiative would find a home in Appalachia, a region in which much of the economy is intertwined with coal. The development of CTL and the success of carbon capture and storage are vital to the Nation's quest for greater energy independence. CTL fuels will assure us of a readily useable, environmentally advanced alternative to current high-cost transportation fuels. And they are strategically beneficial to our Defense Department, which is vigorously pursuing the growth of a domestic alternative fuels industry to make the fuel it needs to keep America secure.

I am proud to support this bill to get our Nation beyond our reliance on foreign fuels and to get our people out from under the heavy hand of Big Oil.